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## **CONSUMER ALERT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **TENNESSEE ATTORNEY GENERAL PROMOTES INTERNET SAFETY FOR YOUTH**

Attorney General Bob Cooper has joined several other state and local officials to promote Internet safety and help keep youth safe online. Following a recent Child Internet Safety Forum at the Nashville Public Library, General Cooper and Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs Director Mary Clement are offering additional information to help keep youth safe online and to help parents learn what they can do to teach their children about the dangers of the Internet.

The Child Internet Safety Forum is the latest in a series of events in which the Attorney General and Division of Consumer Affairs have participated to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act.

“The Internet is a wonderful education tool for our youth and a fun, easy way for them to interact with people their own age,” General Cooper said. “But it’s important for parents, educators and our youth to be aware of the potential dangers and know how to recognize and report suspicious activity to the proper authorities.”

“This is a very important issue and education is key,” said Director Clement. “We strongly urge parents to get involved in what your child is doing on their home computer.”

\*Get to know the Internet services and web sites your children use. Ask your children to show you what they are doing on the Internet and keep the computer in a common place in the home where you can easily see what they are doing.

\*Find out if your Internet service offers ways for parents to block objectionable material. One free site for information on such services is [www.getnetwise.com](http://www.getnetwise.com). Newer versions of some computer operating systems offer parental blocks and reports of the web sites particular users have visited. You can also purchase programs which will restrict access to objectionable sites and give you a report detailing which sites your child has visited and how long they have been on the Internet.

\*Encourage your children to talk to you if they come across something on the Internet with which they are uncomfortable. Try not to overreact when they report something to you so that lines of communication are kept open. If your child receives a message that is threatening or of a sexual nature, forward the e-mail to your service provider and ask for assistance.

\*Protect personal information, and teach your children not to give out information such as their name, address, telephone number, city and state or school name in a public forum such as a chat room. In addition, be sure they do not select user names that give out personal information, such as Amanda\_age\_13 or Rachel\_AntiochMiddle. Do not reply to or click on links in any e-mail asking for personal information. For more information, visit [www.OnGuardOnline.gov/socialnetworking.html](http://www.OnGuardOnline.gov/socialnetworking.html).

\*Remind children that people may not be who they say they are online. Someone who says she is an 18-year-old girl could be a younger girl trying to act older, a teenage boy using someone else's account, an older man or woman, or even a predator looking for victims. Be open with your children about why you are concerned about the possible dangers of the Internet.

\*Never allow a child to meet face-to-face with someone they met online unless you are with them and the first meeting is arranged in a public place.

\*Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, as well as a firewall, and update them regularly. Look for anti-virus software that removes or quarantines viruses, and for anti-spyware that can undo changes spyware makes to your system. Make sure your firewall is on and set up properly.

\*Know who to contact if something goes wrong online. If you experience a problem with online fraud, contact the Division of Consumer Affairs at [www.state.tn.us/consumer](http://www.state.tn.us/consumer). You may also want to file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov). For information about filing complaints about other types of Internet issues, such as reporting viruses, spam, or online investing fraud, visit [www.OnGuardOnline.gov/filecomplaint.html](http://www.OnGuardOnline.gov/filecomplaint.html).